

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



October 1, 1999

ALL COUNTY LETTER 99-79

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CalWORKs PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM SPECIALISTS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- ☒ State Law Change
☐ Federal Law or Regulation
Change
☐ Court Order
☐ Clarification Requested by
One or More Counties
☐ Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: STATEWIDE FINGERPRINT IMAGING SYSTEM IN THE
CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY
TO KIDS (CalWORKs) AND THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAMS

REFERENCE: WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 10830.

CalWORKs MANUAL SECTIONS (M.S.) 40-026.1, .2, .3; 40-105.3, .31, .32, .321, .322, .323, .324, .33, .331(a), (b), .332, .34, .341, .342, .35, .351; 40-171.2, .22, .221 (k); and 80-301 f.(2), p. (2), and S. (8).

FOOD STAMP MANUAL SECTIONS (M. S.) 63-045.1, .11 and .12; 63-102F.(3), 63-102P.(4) and S.(12); 63-201.3 .31, 63-505.14, and .141; 63-601.12, .121, .122, 123, .124, .13, .131, .132, .133, .134 and .14; 63-602.23.

The purpose of this letter is to provide counties with general policy guidelines and instructions for implementation of the Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) in the CalWORKs and Food Stamp Programs. Specific operational instructions will be provided in a users manual to be supplied by the vendor. A procedures manual that was developed by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Fraud Bureau was transmitted to all county welfare directors in a letter dated February 16, 1999.

The SFIS is scheduled to be installed by the vendor in three phases with the first phase scheduled to commence February 21, 2000. Counties will be sent a complete installation schedule advising them of the date of their scheduled SFIS implementation. The regulations governing CalWORKs SFIS requirements were effective January 1, 1998 or when the system becomes operational in the county. Once operational, the counties will have six months to fingerprint image their existing caseloads. Food Stamp regulations were effective July 1, 1998 or when the system is operational and counties will have twelve months to fingerprint image their nonassistance Food Stamp cases. The effective date for new applicants is to be the date of the installation and operation of the SFIS equipment within each county. Refugee Cash Assistance cases and Medically Needy Only cases are not subject to the SFIS requirements.

All records in the SFIS database shall be considered confidential in accordance with Section 10830 (d) of the Welfare and Institutions Code. Counties shall inform all persons providing images that the images will not be disclosed for any purpose other than prevention or prosecution of welfare fraud.

Although the law does not require General Assistance/General Relief (GA/GR)-only applicants and recipients to cooperate with SFIS requirements (i.e. provide fingerprint and photo images), counties have the option to require cooperation as a condition of eligibility to guard against duplication of benefits within the GA/GR program. Counties opting to use SFIS for GA/GR-only applicants and recipients will be charged for the processing costs. CDSS is currently working with the County Welfare Directors Association to develop a GA/GR cost allocation plan and will provide further information to the counties prior to SFIS implementation.

Attachment 1 provides the CalWORKs implementation requirements and Attachment 2 the Food Stamp implementation requirements. Regulations for both programs are also attached.

NOTICE OF ACTION/INFORMING LANGUAGE

Counties may use existing CalWORKs notice of Action (NOA) denial messages for failure to cooperate/refusal to cooperate and the discontinuance NOA requesting essential information.

Attachment 3, the TEMP 2173, is a Required – Substitute Permitted informing document. Counties may modify the format or wording regarding the arrangement of appointments without prior approval. Any other changes to the narrative must be approved in advance by the Department as outlined in the Management and Office Procedures Regulations 23-400.22 and Food Stamp Handbook Regulations 63-1250.

For camera-ready copies of the English and Spanish versions of the forms, counties should call the Forms Management Unit (FMU) at (916) 657-1907 or CALNET at 437-1907. If your office has Internet access, you may obtain various forms and Notice of Form Change (GEN 127) from the CDSS web page at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov>. To accommodate agencies without Internet access, copies will be available by contacting FMU.

Questions relating to system operation should be directed to Valerie Maulet of the CDSS Fraud Bureau at (916) 263-5706. Questions relating to the CalWORKs program or eligibility requirements should be directed to Cheryl Arias of the CalWORKs Eligibility Bureau at (916) 653-4992. For questions relating to Food Stamps, please contact Cindy MacDonald of the Food Stamp Bureau, Policy Implementation Unit at (916) 654-1898.

**Original document signed by
Bruce Wagstaff on 9/30/99
BRUCE WAGSTAFF
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division**

Attachment 1

CalWORKs

All applicants for and recipients of aid under the CalWORKs program, other than dependent children and persons physically unable to provide the necessary images, will be required to provide two fingerprint images and a photo image as a condition of eligibility. This includes:

- Each aided or applicant adult shall fulfill SFIS requirements prior to the approval of CalWORKs benefits to that household;
- Each parent and/or caretaker relative of an aided or applicant child when living in the home of the child;
- Each parent and/or caretaker relative receiving or applying for aid on the basis of an unaided excluded child; and
- The aided or applicant pregnant woman in an assistance unit (AU) consisting of the woman only.

If a person identified above refuses or fails to provide the required images, the entire AU is ineligible. All images must be taken by the SFIS. Images taken by any other system are not acceptable for inclusion in the SFIS database.

EXEMPTIONS:

- Persons with both hands damaged so as to preclude fingerprint imaging shall be excused from fingerprint imaging for a period of not more than sixty days. A photo image will be taken as part of the normal SFIS process.
- Persons missing all ten fingers shall be permanently excused from fingerprint imaging. A photo image will be taken as part of the normal SFIS process.
- Persons with other medically verified physical conditions which preclude them from coming into the office for fingerprint and photo imaging shall be excused for a period of not more than sixty days.
- Counties will determine who is physically unable to comply with the SFIS requirements. Counties will have to reevaluate individuals with a temporary exemption within sixty days.
- The county shall not deny aid to an otherwise eligible applicant because of technical problems with the SFIS.

Attachment 2

FOOD STAMPS

All applicants for and recipients of aid under the Food Stamp program, other than dependent children and persons physically unable to provide the necessary images, will be required to provide two fingerprint images and a photo image as a condition of issuance. This includes:

- Each adult household member who is eligible for Food Stamps, shall fulfill SFIS requirements prior to the issuance of Food Stamp benefits to that household;
- The fingerprint images of the head of household parent and/or caretaker relative of an aided or applicant child when living in the home of the child; and
- If a household member is under the age of 18 and applies for Food Stamps as a separate household, that household member will be required to comply with SFIS requirements.

Expedited service must be issued to a household even if it is not possible to complete the SFIS process in time. However, SFIS compliance should occur prior to the issuance of the household's next allotment.

EXEMPTIONS:

- If a household member has a medically verified permanent physical condition that would make him/her unable to comply with SFIS requirements
- Counties will determine who is physically unable to comply with the SFIS requirements. Counties will have to reevaluate individuals with a temporary exemption within sixty days.
- A household member under the age of 18 is exempt, unless he/she is applying for Food Stamps as his/her own household.
- The County Welfare Department (CWD) shall decide when a household member will receive a postponement from the SFIS process. However, the CWD cannot require a household to make a special trip into the office specifically for the fingerprint imaging process.
- Authorized representatives are not required to comply with SFIS requirements, unless no one in the household which they represent is required or able to comply with SFIS requirements.
- A household member is allowed to receive temporary benefits when he/she is unable to complete the fingerprint imaging process due to a SFIS equipment problem.

NEW CASH AID AND FOOD STAMP RULES FINGERPRINT IMAGING AND PHOTO IMAGING

("Imaging" is a fingerprint or photograph done by a computer.)

As of _____, the county must get fingerprint images and photo images of the following persons living in the home:

For Cash Aid:

- Each parent (natural, adoptive, step-parent) or caretaker relative of an aided child(ren).
- Each parent or caretaker relative of certain excluded child(ren), such as a child who gets SSI/SSP (Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment).
- Each applicant or aided adult.
- A pregnant woman applying for or getting aid for herself only.

For Food Stamps:

- All eligible adult household members.
- The head of household, parent, and/or caretaker relative when living in the home of an aided or applicant child.
- Anyone under age 18 who applies for or receives food stamps as a separate household.
- The ineligible parent or authorized representative if no eligible member of the household is over the age of 18.

The Rules Say That:

- **Applicants** must be fingerprint/photo imaged before cash aid can be approved and/or before food stamps can be issued.
- **Recipients** must also be fingerprint/photo imaged. The county will send an appointment letter telling when and where to go to be fingerprint/photo imaged.

Refusal or Failure to Cooperate: When anyone who is required to cooperate with these rules refuses or fails to be fingerprint/photo imaged:

- Cash aid benefits will be denied or stopped for the entire assistance unit; and/or
- No benefits will be issued to the entire food stamp household.

Confidentiality: The fingerprint/photo images are confidential. They can only be used to prevent or prosecute welfare fraud. The county uses the fingerprint/photo images to:

- See if anyone is trying to get aid using someone else's name and social security number; and
- Be sure the applicant/recipient is not getting aid in more than one case or in more than one county at a time.

Exception to the Rules: Persons who have certain medically verified physical conditions may be temporarily or permanently excused from the imaging rules.

The process for getting your fingerprint/photo images with the statewide imaging system is quick and easy. If you have any questions about these new rules, ask your worker.